

# KINSHIP ALLOWANCE



## What is Kinship Care?

A Kinship Carer is the term used to describe a person who looks after a child, when they are not able to live with their parents. They may be related to the child (through blood, marriage, or civil partnership) or person with whom the child has a pre-existing relationship. Depending how a child comes to be in Kinship arrangement determines what financial supports may be available.

## Financial Considerations

Caring for a child, requires a financial commitment as they grow, this may be until the child reaches 18 years old and possibly beyond. As a kinship carer, you will have additional monetary matters that need to be considered and each circumstance will be unique, however points you might want to consider are:

- Potential adjustment to employment and/ or working patterns, this may be to accommodate childcare, attend meetings, or provide fulltime care.
- Eligibility to benefits and impact on existing benefit entitlements.
- Cost of childcare, depending on age and needs of the child.
- Your family's current financial circumstances, if you are experiencing significant financial hardship how will this be managed.

In line with Scottish Government guidance, Aberdeen City Council offers payments to help in the raising of a child. This is called **Kinship Allowance**.

## Who can apply for Kinship Allowance?

Eligibility to Kinship Allowance depends on how the child came to be Looked After. The calculations and application process are the same in all cases.

The financial support that Aberdeen City Council provides, depends on how you became a kinship carer and/or the child's care status.

It applies to:

- all formal kinship carers where the child has looked after status.
- some informal kinship carers, where the child is not a looked after child but is subject to a Section 11 Order (to be known as a Kinship Care Order), and is or was:
  - previously looked after.
  - placed with involvement from the local authority.
  - at risk of becoming looked after

Kinship Allowance will not be considered in situations which have arisen between family members with no social work involvement, as this is known as a private arrangement.

Nor will carers be identified as Kinship Carers or receive an allowance if a birth parents resides in the same home.

Private kinship carers may still be entitled to claim universal benefits for a child and could contact your local Citizens Advice centre or Kinship Care Advice Service for Scotland on 0808 800 0006.

## How to apply for Kinship Allowance?

The child's social worker should notify the kinship team of a new placement.

Thereafter, the kinship team are responsible for completing and calculating the kinship allowance.

A member of the kinship team will contact you to complete the standardised Kinship Allowance application form. You will be asked to confirm factual details about yourself, the child you care for and specific aspects of your finances, this includes details of your preferred bank account where payments will be made. You will need to sign a declaration of financial responsibilities, in all instances.

For Aberdeen City Council to calculate your payments, photocopies of the most recent documentation of the following are required, where applicable.

- Child Benefit award notice
- Working and/ or Child Tax Credit award notice
- Disability Living Allowance
- Personal Independent Payment award notice
- Legal Order, where this has been granted such as a S11 Residence Order/ care Kinship Order.

If you have not been asked to complete an application within 2 weeks of a child coming to live with you, please contact the Kinship Team directly.

## How much is Kinship Allowance?

Aberdeen City Council determines Kinship Allowance based on the Kinship Childs care circumstances and is paid in line with age related fostering allowance rates, less any eligible child related benefits.

There are four age bands, and the allowance will increase when the child moves into a higher age band.

The weekly allowance rates before any deductions, as described below.

<b>2021/22</b>	<b>0-4 years:</b> £137.44	<b>5- 10 years:</b> £156.55	<b>11-15 years:</b> £194.90	<b>16- 18 years:</b> £237.05	<b>18- 21 years:</b> £237.05
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An additional sum which incorporates the child's birthday, religious festival and summer break payment will be added to the weekly allowance at a standardised rate.

Kinship allowance is not means tested, it is however a declarable income.

## Kinship Allowance and Child-Related Benefits

Aberdeen City Council pays Kinship allowance under Section 22 Children (Scotland) Act 1995. This should be viewed as a wellbeing payment with the additional money ensuring that the Kinship child is able to benefit from the same opportunities as other children.

By paying under this legislation, it should not affect a kinship carers entitlement to Social Security Benefits.

All Kinship Carers are required to access advice in relation to benefit maximisation. This can be done by contacting the National Kinship Helpline or Citizens Advice who can provide independent information and guidance. The details are found at the foot of this leaflet.

Some kinship carers will be eligible for child-related benefits, such as child tax credit, which are intended to cover accommodation and maintenance. If a kinship carer is in receipt of any child-related benefits, then Aberdeen City Council deduct these from the amount of allowance that it pays to the kinship carer. In this situation, any additional payment is to bring the allowance rate up to that of the Kinship Allowance band.

## Child Benefit

Child benefit is a universal benefit for the child. Aberdeen City Council automatically deducts child benefit, at the appropriate rate, from Kinship Allowance Payments as it is expected that Kinship Carers will apply for this. Should the Kinship Carer discover they are not eligible, they should provide evidence to this effect before the allowance rate is varied.

## **Scottish Child Payment**

Scottish Child Payment is a new payment for families on tax credits or certain benefits to help towards the costs of looking after a child. It is £40 paid every four weeks for each child under six.

The qualifying benefits are: Child Tax Credit, Income Support, Pension Credit, Working Tax Credit, Universal Credit, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

Kinship carers, who meet the criteria above, are eligible to claim this benefit and can demonstrate responsibility for a child with a legal order or letter of support from the Kinship Team.

Scottish Child Payment will not be considered for UK benefit and tax credit assessments and there is no cap on the number of children this payment can support. Aberdeen City Council will not deduct Scottish Child Payment from Kinship Allowance rate.

## **What happens if my application for Kinship Allowance is successful?**

The application will be processed by the Kinship team, with the Alternative Family Care Service Manager providing authorisation and confirming eligibility.

Thereafter you will be sent a decision letter and, if granted, a Kinship Allowance Agreement outlining your responsibilities.

Your first payment should be made within three weeks of application and it is paid on a fortnightly basis in advance, generally on a Friday.

Kinship Allowance will automatically end when the child reaches 18 years old, beyond this if the child remains in education payments will continue in line with child benefit eligibility, you must inform the team directly if this applies.

## **There has been a change in my income or circumstances!**

It is very important that you make the Kinship Team aware of any changes in your circumstances, such as your kin child leaving your care, any entitlements, or adjustments to child related benefits. Failure to do so may result in you being at the wrong rate. Any overpayments will need to be repaid and backdated expenses will only be considered for a maximum of three months.

## **Is there any other financial support available?**

Whilst the Kinship Team hopes that our kinship carers are not experiencing significant financial crisis, there is a recognition that the introduction of Universal Credit and money worries are of concern for many families. It may be that the addition of another child requires support to access practical items to meet their care needs. We work closely with local charities such as Abernecessities, Instant Neighbour and Somebody Cares to explore individual's eligibility for accessing material goods, food parcels and charitable donations.

The Kinship Team are available to offer guidance about the kinship allowance and budgeting. In such cases we would refer you for specialist financial support through our partner agencies.

Should you require advice and information or wish to explore your eligibility for Kinship Allowance please contact the Kinship Team.

### **Kinship Team,**

Address: Alternative Family Care, Integrated Children and Family Service, Quarry Centre, Cummings Park Crescent, Aberdeen, AB16 7AS

**Telephone:** 01224 694554

**Email:** [kinship@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:kinship@aberdeencity.gov.uk)

### **Are there any other services that can help?**

The Local Authority is committed to ensuring that Kinship Carers have access to independent information in respect of the important role they undertake.

**Social Security Scotland:** Phone **0800 182 2222**.

**Kinship Care Advice Service for Scotland** provides a free, impartial, and confidential helpline which gives advice and support on all matters relating to kinship. On range of matters including emotional support, Legal issues, Financial, Benefits, Welfare Rights, and provides workshops and training opportunities for carers and professionals.

**Helpline:** **0808 800 0006**, open weekdays **10am-2.30pm** Email: [kinship@adoptionuk.org.uk](mailto:kinship@adoptionuk.org.uk)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/kinshipcarecas/> Website: <https://www.kinship.scot>

### **Citizens Advice Bureau:**

Advisors in every Citizens Advice Bureau in Scotland can provide advice and information about kinship care and they can also access additional, specialist advice where necessary.

Scotland: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/> Advice Line: **0131 550 1000**

England: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/> Advice Line: **0800 144 8848**

### **Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland:**

Webpage [www.cpag.org.uk/scotland](http://www.cpag.org.uk/scotland)

Email address [advice@cpagscotland.org.uk](mailto:advice@cpagscotland.org.uk)

CPAG in Scotland advice line for advisers on benefits and tax credits: 0141 552 0552

Monday to Thursday 10am – 4pm and Friday 10am to 12 noon

### **Other information leaflets are available including:**

**What is Kinship Care, Kinship Allowance, Contact in Kinship Placement and Kinship Care-What Now?**